

2008 Iowa Crop Summary

The 2008 crop season began with cold, wet weather conditions in April. The wet fields slowed progress significantly, leaving only 3.2 total days suitable for fieldwork during the month. By the end of April, corn planting was just starting, and only 28 percent of the oats had been planted. Both crops well behind their 5 year averages.

Soil remained wet throughout May, but farmers took advantage of a few windows for planting oats, corn, and soybeans. The first week of May proved to be very wet on the eastern two-thirds of the state. However, the western third of the state managed to plant over 30 percent of their corn during the week. A few breaks in rain during the second and third week of May allowed for the rest of the state to make progress with their planting. At the end of May, 81 percent of soybeans had been planted and nearly 60 percent had emerged. Corn planting was 97 percent finished and 77 percent had emerged. By the end of May 94 percent of oats had emerged and the first cutting of alfalfa was 8 percent complete.

The first week of June brought severe storms across Iowa. Some areas received more than 8 inches of rain during the week. Standing water was evident throughout fields in the state and flooding near rivers became a major concern. Seventy-four percent of the state had a surplus topsoil moisture level. The second week in June continued the pattern of severe weather. Yellowing and stunting was occurring in the corn crop and soybeans were showing some signs of seedling disease. In addition, much of the alfalfa first cutting was being abandoned because farmers were unable to get at the wet fields. At the end of the second week in June, 15 percent of the corn and soybean crop was in either poor or very poor condition. The third and fourth weeks of June began the recovery stage for crops in Iowa. Drier conditions allowed soil moisture to move away from surplus levels and crops to develop. Also, farmers were able to replant their flooded crops. Eleven percent of the corn crop and 12 percent of the soybean crop had to be replanted during the month. By June's end, the corn stand was at 84 percent, with 100 percent being normal. Oats were 68 percent headed and just starting to turn color. Soybeans were 92 percent emerged. Alfalfa first harvest was 83 percent complete.

Weather in July varied significantly across the state. The northern districts were relatively dry and experienced rapid crop maturation. Whereas the southern districts experienced periods of heavy rain and hail. By the end of the month, northern districts

average topsoil moisture was rated 14 percent surplus. Southern and central districts topsoil moisture was rated 42 percent surplus. Many corn and soybean fields were experiencing uneven maturation problems. By month's end corn was 67 percent tasseled and 45 percent silked, far behind the five-year average. Soybeans were 67 percent bloomed and 26 percent were setting pods. Oat harvest was beginning and the second alfalfa crop was just over half harvested.

Spraying for aphids moved into full swing during August. Most of Iowa experienced drier weather during August. The southwest district was the driest area, rating their topsoil moisture at 36 percent very short. Soybeans were just starting to turn color across the state and one-third of the state's corn was in or past the dent stage. In addition, the third crop of alfalfa was 50 percent complete. August had over 25 days suitable for fieldwork and proved to be a productive month for farmers.

Early September brought colder nightly temperatures which slowed crop maturation. However, by the third week of September, warmer weather returned, and most field crops made significant progress. Soybean harvest was just beginning, primarily in the northern districts. By month's end, 8 percent of the soybean crop was harvested across the state. Corn that was mature and safe from frost was rated at 45 percent, well below the five-year average of 85 percent. Also, some farmers were able to get a fourth cutting off of their alfalfa fields later in the month.

The first two weeks of October allowed farmers to make significant progress harvesting their soybean crop. However, rain fell across the state during the third and fourth weeks which slowed harvest. By the end of October, 87 percent of the soybean crop had been harvested but only 20 percent of the corn crop had been harvested. Twenty-eight percent of the state reported having a surplus amount of topsoil moisture the last week of October.

As November began, harvest was still in full swing. By the second week, soybean harvest was wrapping up across Iowa. Freezing temperatures allowed equipment back into the fields during the third and fourth weeks of November. By the end of November, 94 percent of the corn crop was harvested and 43 percent of the fertilizer application had been completed.